

standard of decency and propriety in the exhibitions was even more complete, and they lasted indefinitely.¹ Constantine in 325 A.D. absolutely forbade gladiatorial exhibitions, because bloody shows were unfit for a time of peace. He forbade the condemnation of criminals to be gladiators. His laws, however, failed of effect.² At the end of the fourth century Symmachus, "who was regarded as one of the most estimable pagans of his age/" collected some prisoners to fight in honor of his son. They committed suicide to escape the destiny for which he designed them. He lamented the misfortune which had befallen him from their ^{if} impious hands," but endeavored to calm his feelings by recalling the patience of Socrates and the precepts of philosophy. He will not, he says, use such people any more, but Libyan lions, more docile than men.³ He serves to point a moral on the mores of his age.

626. The folk drama. The culture classes pass by the sports of the "vulgar" with contempt; but the student of the mores cannot do so. The tastes of the crowd are manifested in them. We read the great dramas which have become a part

of the
world literature, and we form
from them our ideas of the
current
intellectual interest of the
time of their origin and of the
society in
which they were produced.
Such inferences need to be
corrected.

They are certainly erroneous.
The Greeks were not all of
them,

nor any of them all the time,
on a plane of classical
severity and
correctness. Far from it.
They were realistic,
egoistic, cold,
cruel, and fond of sensual
pleasure.⁴ The great dramas,
epics,

etc., were enjoyed only by
the real upper strata of the
society,

just as is the case in regard
to Shakespeare amongst us.

The
great populace of no society
has ever found its
amusement in
purely intellectual
suggestions. With us popular
amusement is
found in the circus, negro
minstrels, the variety show,
opera
bouffe, the spectacle, and
ballet, and it attaches to
parody
and burlesque, " knock-down
business," buffoonery, and
broad

¹ Gibbon, Chap. XL, i.

² Schmidt, *La Société Civile dans le
Monde Romain et sa Transformation
par le*
Christianisme, 469.

⁸ *Ep.*, II, 46; Migne, *Patrol. Latina*,
XVIII, 190.

⁴ Reich, *Der
Mimus*, 32.